

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at p. 10, lines 12-15 with the following paragraph:

--The time for the heat treatment can also be determined by trial and error.

Generally, the lower the temperature for the heat treatment, the longer the time should be.

In all cases however we favor carrying out the heat treatment for at least 4 hours, preferably for at least 12 hours, more preferably for at least 24 hours and most preferably for at least 48 hours.--

In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A method of providing a precursor which comprises an imagable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate, wherein the method comprises a heat treatment step applied to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the precursor is held at an elevated temperature for at least 12 hours in the heat treatment.

9. (Twice Amended) A method of providing a precursor which comprises an imagable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate, wherein the method comprises a heat treatment step applied to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the method is applied to a precursor coil.

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10. (Amended) A method of providing a precursor which comprises an imagable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate, wherein the method comprises a heat treatment step applied to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the method is applied to a stack of at least 100 precursors.

Please add the following new claims:

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22. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the polymeric composition is positive working.

23. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the polymeric composition includes a polymer having hydroxyl groups.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the polymeric composition includes a polymer selected from a phenolic resin and a poly(hydroxystyrene) resin.

25. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the polymeric composition includes a novolak resin.

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26. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the glass transition temperature of the coating is not exceeded in the heat treatment.

27. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the precursor is held at an elevated temperature, for at least 12 hours in the heat treatment.

28. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the precursor is held at an elevated temperature in the range 40-90°C during the heat treatment.

29. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the method is applied to a precursor coil.

30. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the removal of moisture is inhibited by wrapping or encasing the precursor in a substantially water-impermeable material.

31. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the removal of moisture is inhibited by carrying out of the heat treatment in an environment having elevated moisture content.

32. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the coating is such that its solubility in a developer is not increased by incident UV radiation.

33. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein said coating is such that it may be patternwise imaged by direct heat; or by charged particle radiation or electromagnetic radiation, in the latter cases said radiation being converted to heat by the coating.

34. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the coating comprises a radiation-absorbing compound able to absorb electromagnetic radiation entirely or predominantly in the range 600 to 1400 nm and convert it to heat.

35. (New) The method of claim 10 wherein the coating comprises insolubilizer means which acts to inhibit the dissolution of the coating in a developer prior to imaging.

36. (New) A method for providing a printing form precursor, comprising: (a) providing an imageable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate; and (b) applying a heat treatment step to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the method is applied to a stack of at least 100 precursors.

37. (New) A method for providing an electronic part precursor, comprising (a) providing an imageable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate; and (b) applying a heat treatment step to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the method is applied to a stack of at least 100 precursors.

38. (New) A positive working lithographic printing form precursor produced by a method comprising: (a) providing an imageable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate; (b) applying a heat treatment step to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the method is applied to a stack of at least 100 precursors.

39. (New) A positive working electronic part precursor produced by a method comprising: (a) providing an imageable coating comprising a polymeric composition on a substrate; and (b) applying a heat treatment step to the precursor, the heat treatment step taking place under conditions which inhibit the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment, wherein the method is applied to a stack of at least 100 precursors.

40. (New) A method of producing an imaged article, comprising:

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(a) providing a precursor having an imageable coating which comprises a polymeric composition on a substrate, wherein heat treatment has been applied to the precursor such that the removal of moisture from the precursor during the heat treatment is inhibited;

(b) imagewise exposing the coating; and

(c) contacting the exposed coating with an aqueous developer, wherein the method is applied to a stack of at least 100 precursors.